



## Grassroots Ecology

**Placement Site Address:** 3921 East Bayshore Rd Palo Alto, CA 94303

Palo Alto, CA - [City Data Information Link](#)

**Mentors:** Kristen Williams, Habitat Restoration Director; Stephanie Saffouri, Project Lead; and Tyler Feld, Project Lead

**Number of Years Site has hosted WSP CMs:** 10

**Number of CMs at Site:** 4

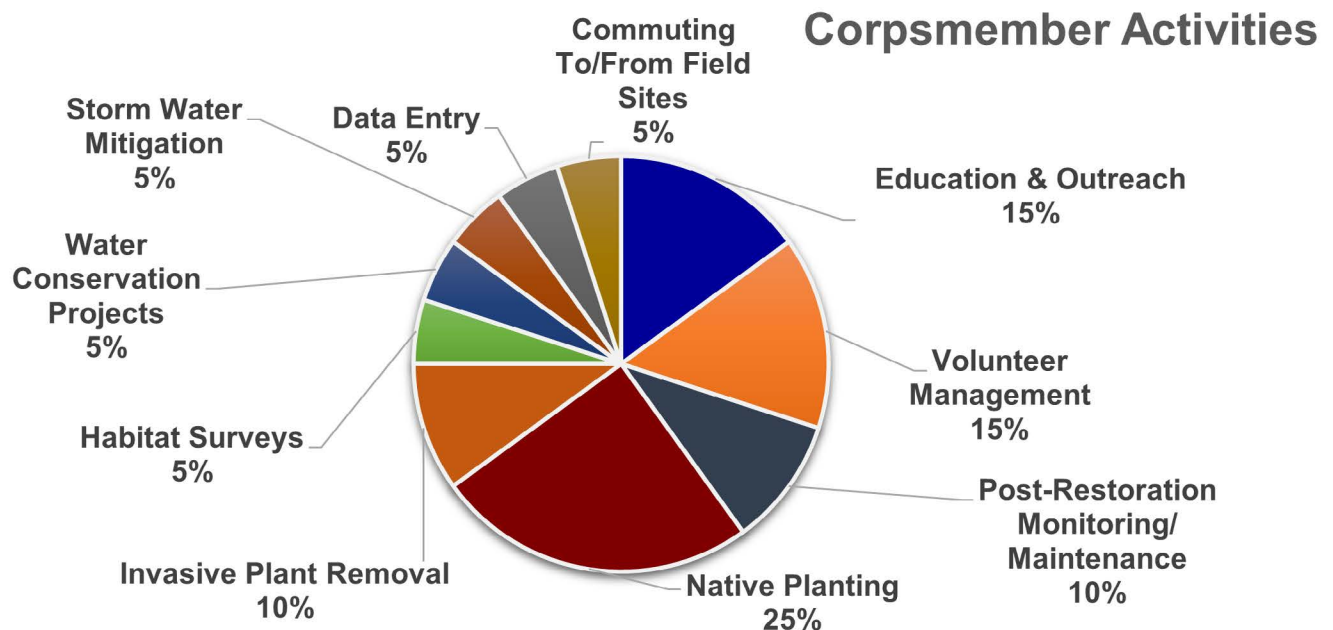
**Other Partner Organization(s) of Placement Site:** Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, City of Cupertino, City of Palo Alto, [San Jose Conservation Corps + Charter School](#) (2.5%); [Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society](#) (2%), Friends of Stevens Creek Trail (1%)

**Service Hours:** 8-hour days: 100%

**Housing Offered:** No

**Work Vehicle Provided:** No

**CM Time Spent in Field/Office:** In the field: 70%, In the office: 30%



### Placement Site Objectives & Organizational Needs:

Grassroots Ecology has several restoration sites in the Stevens, San Francisquito and Los Gatos Creek Watersheds. One team of Corpsmembers (CMs) will work in the more urban watersheds of Stevens Creek, and one team of CMs will work in the upland watersheds of San Francisquito and Los Gatos Creeks. All CMs will work one day per week at the organization's Native Plant Nursery. They will also have opportunities to visit and assist with various projects within the organization as well as attend all-staff learning workshops, which take place 1-2 times per month.



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The work done within each watershed is described below:

### Urban Watersheds

Stevens Creek – Grassroots Ecology stewards McClellan Ranch- a public open space preserve along Stevens Creek in Cupertino. The main activities at this site are engaging the public to maintain and expand a 5-acre riparian meadow restoration project and providing hands-on environmental education for local youth.

#### **The Corpsmembers that will work in this team will:**

- Be on site at McClellan ranch at least three days per week.
- Assist with 32 volunteer events over the course of the year.
- Assist with 20 educational events, including Youth Stewards and field trips, over the course of the year.
- Prepare for and manage volunteers about 30% of the time, including education and outreach.
- Conduct restoration activities 25% of their time, including weeding, planting and maintenance.
- Assist with seed collection and native plant propagation for 20% of their time through their work at the Native Plant Nursery
- Corpsmembers will spend about 5% of their time conducting vegetation surveys, insect surveys and restoration success monitoring.



### Upland Watersheds

San Francisquito Creek – Grassroots Ecology has multiple sites within this watershed – both in the urban environment in the lower watershed as well as in the larger open spaces in the upper watershed. Work done in the urban stretch of this creek involves engaging the public to improve biodiversity along the creek, upgrading green stormwater infrastructure, providing hands-on environmental education for local youth and monitoring water quality. In the upper watershed, Grassroots Ecology stewards Foothills Nature Preserve in Palo Alto, Hawthorns Preserve in Portola Valley, and Russian Ridge Open Space in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Activities at this site are engaging the public to remove invasive species and install native plants, providing hands-on environmental education for local youth and assisting at our Native Plant Nursery.



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**Los Gatos Creek** – Grassroots Ecology has one site in this watershed – Bear Creek Redwoods in Los Gatos. Activities at these sites are engaging the public to remove invasive species and conducting vegetation monitoring.

**The Corpsmembers that will work in this team will:**

- Be on site at Foothills Nature Preserve at least one day per week.
- Be on site at Hawthorns Preserve, Bear Creek Redwood, or Russian Ridge preserves at least one day per week.
- Assist with 44 volunteer events over the course of the year.
- Assist with 20 educational events, including Youth Stewards and field trips, over the course of the year.
- Prepare for and manage volunteers about 30% of the time, including education and outreach.
- Conduct restoration activities 25% of their time, including weeding, planting and maintenance.
- Assist with seed collection and native plant propagation for 20% of their time through their work at the Native Plant Nursery
- Corpsmembers will spend about 5% of their time conducting vegetation surveys, insect surveys and restoration success monitoring.

Grassroots Ecology's mission "to engage and educate the public to restore local ecosystems" drives our goals of community-based habitat restoration across each site. CMs will spend most of their time in the field, conducting hands-on restoration and stewardship of land and watersheds. Restoration field activities will include invasive plant removal, native plant revegetation, tree planting, willow staking, seeding, watering, restoration site monitoring and maintenance. Corpsmembers will also spend significant time leading volunteers in conducting all of the aforementioned tasks. Additionally, Corpsmembers will be responsible for planning and leading a weekly volunteer and educational program for youth. Office tasks may include tracking and reporting on project metrics, entering and analyzing data, writing and presenting reports, planning for educational activities, creating curriculum or outreach materials, recruiting volunteers, or other projects as needed to assist their Project Lead. Corpsmembers will also spend about one day per week working in our Native Plant Nursery. Tasks here will include upsizing, propagation, and seed collection.

**Mentorship Style:**

Each team of CMs placed at Grassroots Ecology will have one primary Mentor and two additional Mentors that they will work with closely throughout their service term. CMs will spend most of their time on habitat restoration and environmental education projects, which will be supervised by the primary Mentor. The primary Mentor will onboard them to the organization, conduct regular team and individual check ins, complete job



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performance evaluations, and oversee the day-to-day work and responsibilities of the CMs. The secondary Mentors will supervise the CMs in urban ecology and native plant nursery projects, which will occur regularly but less frequently than their main assignments. Mentors alongside other staff are experienced botanists, plant enthusiasts, educators, and naturalists of all sorts, providing the ability for CMs to explore several avenues of the environmental field while serving with this team.

In addition to learning from their mentors, CMs get the opportunity to bring their passion to our organization, be a part of high-level conversations, and implement their own ideas into our projects. Each term with WSP brings a fresh perspective on the work we do and how to support community-based restoration.

### Urban Watersheds

The mentor for the Urban Watersheds is Stephanie Saffouri who has been with Grassroots Ecology since 2021. Stephanie enjoys educating CMs through field walks, career discussions and providing opportunities for CMs to develop their leadership and speaking skills. Stephanie is skilled at engaging with the community in addition to her educational and professional experience with CA native plants and ecosystems.

### Upland Watersheds

Tyler Feld is the mentor for the Upland Watershed team and has been with Grassroots Ecology since 2021. Tyler enjoys providing guidance and support to help CMs learn about volunteer management and restoration strategies in the Bay Area's more (relatively) remote settings. Tyler is a skilled educator and has a special interest in engaging the LGBTQ+ community in outdoor nature experiences.

### Unique Characteristics of Placement Site:

The Bay Area provides a truly special balance between the excitement of urban cities and the solace of abundant open spaces. Working on environmental projects here ensures CMs will have an opportunity to interact with a diverse array of people, ecosystems, and partnering organizations. Project sites span from urban creeks to city parks, to large open spaces in the Santa Cruz Mountains, so there is always an opportunity to study restoration from a new perspective.

The focus on plants and people makes Grassroots Ecology unique. CMs can work with and learn from the experienced botanists, ecologists, and plant enthusiast staff members, and by the end of their term, they will be equipped with the plant identification knowledge they need to succeed in a career in vegetation management.





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Moreover, as a small grassroots nonprofit, Grassroots Ecology is committed to building a culture of empathy, creativity, and collaboration. Several days are dedicated each month to gather to work on a combined project together or learn from one another in a more formal setting. Grassroots Ecology has also invested in developing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) competency both within the organization and for its programs and community. Grassroots Ecology is in the process of implementing a DEI plan and encourages CMs to be part of this effort.

CMs don't just learn from Grassroots Ecology—Grassroots Ecology learns from them and the ideas and fresh perspective they bring to the organization. From day one, CMs become leaders in their community, and Grassroots Ecology invests significant time and intention to help them develop the skills and confidence that CMs need to thrive in this role.

Each team of CMs will be working alongside our Nursery Team at the Grassroots Ecology Native Plant Nursery. The Nursery is unique in that it grows plants from seed collected in the watershed in which it will be planted, thus protecting genetic locality and diversity. CMs will learn about the various techniques for propagating native plants - including rare and threatened species – as well as how to properly take care of nursery plants and how to collect seed. All the plants in the Nursery are grown to the latest sanitary protocols to reduce the introduction of pathogens into our wildlands, and CMs will learn about and follow these practices.

### Urban Watershed

The Urban Watershed Team is based at our home site, McClellan Ranch Nature Preserve in Cupertino. This lively neighborhood preserve is frequented by local residents, kids groups, community gardeners, and high school and college students. CMs will likely get to know some of the regular visitors, and they are expected to be a welcoming face to the public. We also have strong relationships with Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and the City of Cupertino staff, both of whom will be partners and educational/professional resources for the CMs.

McClellan is a very accessible site, and as such is a popular location for volunteer activities and school field trips. CMs will help lead regularly scheduled public and private volunteer events at least one weekend per month, as well as the occasional weekday volunteer workday. The McClellan team also has established connections with environmental studies and biology classes from San Jose State University and De Anza College, and CMs will help lead school field trips related to creek science and plant community ecology. These field trips require developing basic proficiency in topics



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such as botany and plant ecology, scientific data collection, creek chemistry, and aquatic invertebrate ecology. As a team we occasionally read papers, watch online talks, and hold small-team workshops to help build the vocabulary and knowledge associated with these subjects. Our pod particularly suits CMs who have a strong interest in evidence-based science and education.

CMs at our pod will have chances to see other project sites through pod-sharing and whole-staff trainings, but they will develop a much deeper knowledge of one site by nature of our home base set-up. Our primary obligations revolve around our contract with the City of Cupertino, which is heavily focused on planting native plants and conducting volunteer events. We do have additional smaller contracts with Santa Clara Valley Water district (Valley Water), which involve invasive plant management along Stevens Creek, fire fuel management, and pollution prevention. CMs will gain an understanding of long-term approaches to restoring and maintaining a site while navigating the dynamics of working adjacent to city bureaucracy.

### Upland Watershed

The Upland Watersheds Team gets the opportunity to explore a diverse set of local open spaces by partnering with the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and City of Palo Alto Open Space. These partnerships provide opportunities to get to know park rangers, biologists, and various land management professionals. While working with these agencies, CMs get training to identify sensitive species, prevent spread of pathogens (*Phytophthora* spp.) and strategize for managing larger landscapes. These projects additionally feature several vegetation surveys and monitoring projects surrounding rare and threatened species, identifying large populations of native plants, and assessing success of previous restoration efforts.

A primary objective of these partnerships is to provide service-learning opportunities to engage the community into the field of habitat restoration. CMs help Grassroots Ecology achieve this by helping staff run an average of five events per month with community members, school classes, and private groups working with over 750 volunteers over the course of their term. With this additional emphasis, CMs have additional practice facilitating educational programming and sharing their knowledge of ecologies in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Connecting with volunteers provides additional networking opportunities, builds friendships, and celebrates community space. This pod's work inspires community members to get outside and facilitates a unique sense of place within the Bay Area.



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While working across five different sites listed below, CMs learn about local ecosystems including riparian corridors, native grasslands, bay laurel forest, seasonal wetlands and more throughout the SF Peninsula. Each preserve has its own unique characteristics and projects, making the pod's work new and exciting each day!

- Foothills Nature Preserve
- Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space
- Russian Ridge Open Space
- Hawthorns Open Space
- Skyline Ridge Open Space

### **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Desired in CM:**

- Desire and ability to connect with community members from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences.